

Meeting  
23/03/07

Agenda Item  
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Reference No  
HEFCW/07/28

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## INTRODUCTION

- 1 This paper provides the outcome of the second consultation on the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Institutional Review: Wales.

## BACKGROUND

- 2 The QAA was established in 1997 to provide an integrated quality assurance service for higher education institutions throughout the UK. At that time, the QAA brought together the functions of the former Higher Education Quality Council and the quality assessment functions of the English and Welsh higher education funding councils (the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council was brought in formally in 2000). The QAA carries out Institutional Reviews of Welsh Higher Education Institutions to assure the quality of provision.
- 3 At the April 2006 meeting of the Learning and Teaching Committee a paper was presented noting differences between the revised Institutional Audit in England and Northern Ireland and the Institutional Review Wales (IR) process. The Committee agreed that the sector should be consulted on whether any amendments should be made to the IR process midway through the six year cycle to reflect wider UK/European changes.
- 4 The first part of the consultation was on whether the outcome judgement should be changed from 'broad confidence' to 'confidence,' both prospectively and retrospectively. There was broad support from the sector for this change, which was approved by Council at its October meeting (item HEFCW/06/CE7 refers).
- 5 The second part of the consultation was on other changes which could be made to the Institutional Review: Wales process. This paper provides the outcome of that consultation.

## CONSULTATION ON CHANGES TO THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW

- 6 The outcomes of the second consultation on the Institutional Review: Wales were considered by the Council's Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) at its January meeting.
- 7 The LTC recommended that any changes to the IR should be made at the end of the cycle. It identified that the outcome of this consultation would be useful in evaluating the current process and determining changes to be made in the next cycle, from 2009/10.
- 8 The draft circular on the outcomes of this consultation is attached at **Annex A**.
- 9 In the light of the changes in England, the LTC also recommended that the qualitative information provided by institutions should be removed from the TQI website and that institutions should seek to make it available by other means, eg on their websites.

***Council is invited to agree the recommendations of the Learning and Teaching Committee, that:***

- (i) ***no further changes be made to the Institutional Review during the current cycle, and***
- (ii) ***that the qualitative information provided by institutions on the Teaching Quality Information website be published by institutions elsewhere.***

***Council is invited to approve the publication of Annex A as the outcome of the consultation.***

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

10 There are no financial implications for the Council in agreeing to the recommendations in this paper.

**PUBLICITY IMPLICATIONS**

11 There may be some press interest in the outcomes of the reviews for individual institutions. There are no other publicity implications arising from the issues presented in this paper.

**RISK ASSESSMENT**

12 Risks arising from the issues covered by the paper are identified in the table below, together with action taken to ameliorate those risks.

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Amelioration</b>
Reduced comparability of review outcomes between institutions in Wales if changes were made to the institutional review mid-cycle	Recommendation that no further changes are made mid cycle
Reduced comparability between Welsh and English Institutions in the review	The outcome judgement has been changed, so there is comparability in terms of published judgements
Removal of teaching quality information from the public domain making it harder for stakeholders to access	Recommendation that institutions publish this information elsewhere, eg on their websites
Presentation of information from Wales on the TQI website in a different format to England, raising queries in the minds of stakeholders	Recommendation that the TQI qualitative information be removed from the TQI website for Welsh institutions, as for English institutions

**DIVERSITY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

13 The University of Bristol has been contracted to analyse the 2006 results to consider, among other issues, the impact on the results of of (i) gender, (ii) age, (iii) socio-economic group, (iv) ethnicity, (v) declared disability, (vi) prior educational attainment, (vii) distance from address to University, and (ix) mode of study. The analysis will also endeavour to examine differences in responses between English and Welsh medium respondents in Wales. The TQI NSS materials and website are available in Welsh, and thus promotes and facilitates the use of Welsh. HEFCW bears the full costs of the translation of the site.

14 The QAA takes account of the Welsh language, diversity and equality opportunities implications in carrying out the Institutional Reviews.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

15 The Council is invited to:

- i) Agree the recommendation of the Learning and Teaching Committee, that no further changes be made to the Institutional Review during the current cycle
- ii) Agree the recommendation of the LTC that the qualitative information provided by institutions on the Teaching Quality Information website be published by institutions elsewhere;
- iii) Approve the publication of Annex A as the outcome of the consultation.

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